



**PRESS RELEASE**

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**PORT OF HOUSTON LURES RETURN OF NORWEGIAN CRUISE LINE**

New three-year agreement to sail 48 cruises from Houston yearly

**HOUSTON** – The Port of Houston Authority (PHA) today announced that Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL) will return to provide leisure passenger cruises from Houston, beginning in November, 2003. Under terms of the three-year agreement, NCL's Norwegian Sea vessel will make a minimum of 48 calls per year at the Port of Houston, offering seven-day exotic West Caribbean itineraries that include calls at the ports of Roatan, Honduras; Belize City, Belize; and Cancun and Cozumel, Mexico. NCL previously offered a series of cruises from Houston in 2001.

“We are delighted to herald the return of NCL to the Port of Houston,” stated James T. Edmonds, Chairman of the Port of Houston Authority Commission. Edmonds noted that Houston's port has become increasingly appealing to cruise line operators because of its close location to several popular Mexican and Caribbean vacation destinations. “The cruise industry's rapid expansion underscores the need for the Port Authority's proposed Bayport project, which will feature three berths to accommodate the growing fleets of sleek, modern and luxurious passenger vessels,” Edmonds stated.

The Bayport project remains under review by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which is expected to issue a final environmental impact statement (FEIS) in March, 2003. Pending the FEIS and construction permit approvals, the PHA is committed to meeting ISO 14001 standards upon the completion and opening of the Bayport facility.

“NCL opened up cruising from the Gulf ports in 1997 with our breakthrough Texaribbean program from Houston and we are excited to be going back there after an absence of over two years,” said Colin Veitch, president and CEO of Norwegian Cruise Line. “Houston is a great drive up market as well as an extremely attractive port of embarkation, especially for vacationers in the western half of the United States who won't have to catch the red-eye all the way to the East Coast in order to experience a Western Caribbean cruise.”

## Cruise Industry Economic Impact

In 2001, approximately 90,000 cruise passengers embarked on cruises to the western Caribbean and Mexico from the ports of Galveston and Houston, according to Business Research & Economic Advisors (BREA), an Exton, Pennsylvania-based firm that specializes in custom market analyses for clients throughout the private and public sectors. BREA's data show that \$325 million in direct spending by the cruise industry and its passengers in Texas during 2001 generated \$667 million in total output, more than 5,250 jobs throughout the state, and \$207 million in wages and salaries.

According to BREA, the direct economic impacts were derived from a broad range of activities, including air transportation of cruise passengers, pre- and post-cruise tourism, and the provisioning and servicing of ships. The indirect economic benefits resulted in part from the additional spending by the suppliers to the cruise industry (e.g. food processors, utility services, transportation services, insurance, etc.) In addition to the indirect impacts generated by the purchase of business goods and services by cruise industry suppliers, the employees of the cruise lines and the suppliers generated indirect economic benefits through their purchases of consumer goods and services (e.g. autos, food, clothing, furniture, health care, etc.)

## The Norwegian Sea

Norwegian Sea, which entered service in 1988, is a 42,000-ton vessel with a multitude of public spaces and guest amenities. The ship offers NCL's innovative Freestyle Cruising concept with a variety of restaurants including two main dining rooms, NCL's signature Le Bistro restaurant, the Big Apple Café and Lickety Splits ice cream parlor. Entertainment options abound with the Cabaret Lounge, the Stardust Lounge; Boomers Disco; and the Monte Carlo Casino. Junior cruisers have their own playroom, "The Porthole," for NCL's "Kids Crew" activities, and guests of all ages can enjoy the Norwegian Sea's spacious pool deck, spa and 24-hours per day fitness area.

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### **The Port of Houston Authority**

*The Port of Houston Authority owns and operates the public facilities located along the Port of Houston, the 25-mile long complex of diversified public and private facilities designed for handling general cargo, containers, grain, and other dry bulk materials, project and heavy lift cargo, and other types of cargo. The Port of Houston Authority plays a vital role in ensuring navigation safety along the Houston Ship Channel, which has been instrumental in Houston's development as a center of international trade. The port – sixth largest in the world – is ranked first in the United States in foreign waterborne tonnage and second in total tonnage. Each year, more than 6,600 vessels from around the world call at the port. The Port of Houston Authority's Barbours Cut Container Terminal and Central Maintenance Facility are the first of any port facilities in the U.S. to develop and implement an innovative Environmental Management System that meets the rigorous standards of ISO 14001 compliance. For more information, please visit [www.portofhouston.com](http://www.portofhouston.com).*

### **Norwegian Cruise Line**

*Miami-based Norwegian Cruise Line is an international cruise company and industry innovator that operates a fleet of nine ships sailing to more than 140 ports around the world. For further information on NCL, please visit [www.ncl.com](http://www.ncl.com).*